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SIRC REVIEW 2016-04
CSIS'S EVOLVING COLLECTION PLATFORMS ABROAD

SUMMARY

This review set out to assess the initial rationale for a new foreign collection platform model   and to examine its current functionality. Another objective of the review was to follow-up on observations from a previous SIRC study and examine CSIS's efforts at addressing the

Overall, the review observed that CSIS has methodically tracked the progress of   and has identified areas requiring further attention to help meet operational objectives. In particular, SIRC noted gaps in the development and deployment of Standard Operating Procedures   for use by CSIS employees working abroad, and has therefore made a recommendation in this regard.

In addition, SIRC found that   collection efforts on behalf of   personnel working overseas was limited and made a recommendation to help address this issue.

SIRC also noted the removal of   caveat on the exchange of information pertaining to   and recommended that CSIS establish, on a priority basis, policy and procedures in this regard.

The review concludes with some general observations informed by years of SIRC reviews involving CSIS's overseas activities.

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1   INTRODUCTION

In recent years, CSIS has sought to refine and enhance its collection capacity abroad to better meet intelligence requirements, namely with the launch of a new foreign collection platform model. In late 2014, CSIS decided to pilot the   concept   given this station's geo-political and strategic importance in the investigation against Daesh[1] and Canadian foreign fighters. The intent   is to forward deploy additional staff with diverse skillsets, led by a senior executive, to respond more nimbly to requirements, to enhance communication connectivity, and to cover a larger geographic area.

This review set out to assess the initial rationale for the   model piloted and to examine its current functionality. In so doing, SIRC aimed to gain a thorough understanding of the initiative, and more broadly, to better understand CSIS's vision for its foreign collection activities going forward. Another objective of the review was to follow-up on observations made in SIRC's *Review of CSIS's Investigation of Canadian Foreign Fighters* and examine CSIS's efforts at addressing

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Overall, this review observed that CSIS has methodically tracked the progress of the   pilot and has identified areas requiring further attention to help meet operational objectives. In particular, SIRC noted gaps in the development and deployment of Standard Operating Procedures   for use by CSIS employees working abroad, and has therefore made a recommendation in this regard.

In addition, SIRC found that   collection efforts   was limited and made a recommendation to help address this issue. SIRC also noted the removal of the 'no lethal action' caveat on the exchange of information pertaining to   and recommended that CSIS establish, on a priority basis, policy and procedures in this regard. The review concludes with some general observations informed by years of SIRC reviews involving CSIS's overseas activities.

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[1] As stated by the Minister of Public Safety in the *2016 Public Report On The Terrorist Threat To Canada*, Ministerial Forward: "It is a serious and unfortunate reality that terrorist groups, most notably the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), use violent extremist propaganda to encourage individuals to support their cause. This group is neither Islamic nor a state, and so will be referred to as Daesh (its Arabic acronym) in this Report." Source location: https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/2016-pblc-rpr-trrrst-thrt/index-en.aspx
[2] As previously reported in Study 2015-09,

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2   METHODOLOGY

This study examined all relevant documentation pertaining to activities related to
_____ including: station and country profiles, foreign arrangements, relevant
human source files, briefing notes, planning documents, security procedures, policy
documentation, CSIS reporting and exchanges with other Government of Canada
(GoC) departments/agencies and foreign partners in the region, allied reporting, weekly
accountability reports, email correspondence and intelligence assessments. Given that

attention was also paid to the setup and functionality of ·   and the provision of
intelligence in support of _____ The review also assessed whether
CSIS's activities were in accordance with its mandate and authorities, and in line with
the government's priorities and intelligence requirements.

In addition to holding briefings with representatives from _____ and
_____, SIRC conducted an on-site visit   in mid-October
2016.   , SIRC's Executive Director and accompanying staff held multiple
meetings with CSIS personnel, as well as met with the Canadian Ambassador and other
GoC officials. CSIS also arranged for SIRC to meet with three additional CSIS
employees while in

The core review period was from January 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016, although SIRC
examined documentation which fell outside this period in order to provide a complete
assessment of relevant issues.

3   THE   MODEL

In late 2014,   was designated   of a collection program primarily designed to provide the GoC "with intelligence pertaining to the high-risk traveller/foreign fighter challenge."[3] At the outset of this initiative, CSIS HQ developed a robust performance management matrix to help measure and track the pilot's progress, which included four operational objectives.

                                                                In essence, was to act as the launching ground for regional operations on CSIS's highest priority investigation.

As of late 2016,   is supported by   staff:

3.1   Initial Assessment

The transition   began in the summer of 2015 with the arrival of additional CSIS personnel. An assessment of   first year must consider early logistical issues that delayed its full functionality. Additional CSIS personnel arrived before the expansion and fit-up of the office was complete leading to sharing of limited work stations. At the same time,   experienced significant lingering connectivity and technical issues that slowed the pace of work.[5] More importantly, perhaps, the

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[3] More broadly, and looking forward, the idea was also to establish a stable and robust infrastructure to address future   requirements. DG   to ADC,   Proposal – Supplemental (December 5, 2014).

[5] Weekly Accountability Reports   2015-2016. For example:

            SIRC was told that CSIS HQ provided technical assistance on a number of occasions and eventually the issues were resolved.

led to a diversion of resources. The decision to   created a workload pressure   as it was decided that the first resourcing option for   would be to utilize capacity from   As a result, during the first half of 2016,   personnel travelled   to lay the required groundwork for operational and liaison activity

Notwithstanding this situation, one of the key successes of the pilot thus far has been greater engagement with regional partners, most notably
                              who is deemed to be CSIS's strongest partner agency and ally   . This situation owes to   providing more operational reporting   to an increase in operational exchanges and senior/executive level visits, as well as enhanced analytical exchanges focussed on CSIS's collection requirements and interests. Overall, SIRC heard that the expansion of CSIS's presence   has brought the relationship   to a "new level of cooperation" and that this relationship is "at an all-time high."[6]

          personnel have also worked to establish and develop new local relationships,
                              to collect on intelligence requirements relating to Daesh and foreign fighters.[7] CSIS sees the development of this relationship as a regional priority, and so, exchanges   have been progressing at a "healthy pace with respect to declared operations and requests to undertake operational activity."[8] CSIS also entered into a relationship with
                    but has taken a more cautious and gradual approach to this engagement owing to concerns regarding the organization's respect for human rights
              [9] Still,   personnel pointed out that much of the success at collecting intelligence on CSIS targets has come from engagement with local partners, which is why they are actively working to
              in the region.

Success in enhancing local partnerships owes to collective efforts. The   manager, who is a CSIS senior executive, has worked to leverage relationships at more senior levels. Ongoing liaison efforts have been complemented and furthered by almost two dozen senior/Executive level visits to the region.[10] This high-level engagement has

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[6] Meetings with CSIS personnel, SIRC visit   (October 18-20, 2016)

[7] The foreign arrangements with   were approved in the summer of 2015.
[8]   Arrangement Profile, 2016,
[9]   Arrangement Profile, 2016,
[10] There have been over 20 Executive/senior management/other high-level visits
          including the National Security Advisor, CSIS Director, Assistant Director Collection and Assistant Director Intelligence.

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opened the door to greater working-level exchanges, led mainly by
                        . The new   position, in particular, has brought enhanced
tactical and analytical capacity.[11] The   work
                                          . has paved the way for more regular and
focused operational and analytical exchanges with local partners.[12]

CSIS personnel   have also enhanced regional relationships with Canadian
partners. During its on-site visit, SIRC met with several
partners   and was told that there is good
cooperation and that the relationships have been positive and productive. SIRC was
informed that CSIS's mandate is well-understood by partners, who unanimously
commented on the value of both the informal and formal advice CSIS provides on
various national security matters. SIRC was left with the overall impression that CSIS is
seen as a valuable team player at the embassy, which is a positive reflection on all
CSIS   personnel.

On the operational side, challenges remain

Still,   noted that he has been working to
and has made headway in laying the groundwork for

[14] Overall, SIRC heard that while efforts   are
starting to show promising signs, there are not yet measurable outcomes.

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[11] The role of   was likened to   in other allied agencies or that of the
              under the new SPOT model.
[12] Meetings with CSIS personnel, SIRC visit
[13] Meetings with CSIS personnel, SIRC visit
[14] Meetings with CSIS personnel, SIRC visit

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3.2   The Year Ahead

More broadly, and looking beyond established performance outcomes, CSIS HQ has acknowledged the need for further discussion on the holistic management   .[15] There is an expectation that   will function increasingly as a single entity, with   working in synch towards a collective goal. For example, there will be a move to further consolidate reporting requirements and financial authorities, to streamline financial processes, to clearly define the role and responsibilities of new functions and to better utilize   .[16] At the same time, communications equipment will need to be upgraded: .[17] These issues are considered as normal administrative "growing pains" involved with the transition

At the heart of this transition is the relationship between CSIS HQ and   , as well as the issue of delegated authorities. The nature and extent of support provided by CSIS HQ remains to be determined, both on the operational and administrative fronts. SIRC also noted a lack of clarity with respect to the expected role and delegated authorities of the   manager, as compared to   . CSIS HQ has indicated that, going forward,   should be providing increasingly more direction, assistance and policy support to   ; on the other hand,   may be lacking certain authorities to become more self-sufficient.[18] The delegation issue, while challenging to implement, will be crucial to the success of the pilot.

SIRC acknowledges that CSIS HQ is aware of the challenges noted above and is actively working with   personnel to address them. CSIS   has given management various tasks to strengthen the proof positive of the concept, such as assigning clear responsibilities for new functions, consolidating reporting requirements, and considering the need to develop new policies, procedures or business processes.[19] All stakeholders appear committed to making the pilot work. On the ground, certainly, SIRC heard that the model is the right one to support CSIS with its expanded overseas collection mandate.

Overall, SIRC found that CSIS has methodically tracked the progress of the   pilot and has identified areas requiring further attention to help meet operational objectives.

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[15]   presentation to EXCOM   Pilot (September 26, 2016).
[16] Email from   to   Manager (July 29, 2016).
[17] SIRC was told that CSIS plans to modernize these communications systems in early 2017.
[18] For example, SIRC was told that it would be beneficial for the   manager to authorize the use of   , to have greater financial authority over the   budget as a whole, or to possess the ability to reallocate regional resources to address specific issues or strategic requirements. Email   to SIRC, trends (undated) (October 7, 2016).
[19] Email from   to   Manager (July 29, 2016).

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4.2   **Standard Operating Procedures**

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SIRC expected to see evidence of SOPs   This
expectation was also built on SIRC being told that lessons learned from experience
within Afghanistan and other DOEs assisted in developing the operational posture
        However, **SIRC found that CSIS has not created any formal process for
discussing, evaluating, assessing and documenting what would constitute
necessary and reasonable SOPs**   [39]

SIRC is not disputing the fact that activities within DOEs necessitate quick decision
making to survive, evade, resist and escape hostile scenarios.

SIRC believes that absent the development of a baseline of SOPs, it will remain a
challenge for CSIS management to proactively identify problems, and furthermore,
competently address changes to employee conduct post-incident(s).[40] To address these
perceived deficiencies in accountability for   procedures, **SIRC
recommends that CSIS develop SOPs derived from lessons-learned from
operating within DOEs in order to ensure that management and employees are
aware of, and accountable for, baseline expectations of conduct.**

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[39] Overall CSIS's written responses were vague, providing insufficient details on many of the actions expected of
employees. Nothing appears to have been written down about
                                        Refer to CSIS Email, "Subject: Update" (November 2, 2016).
[40] During SIRC's visit   one of the   officers spoke about the extensive preparation prior to
                              , as well as the expert advice provided by   on how to handle
various operational scenarios. Nothing said in this review is meant to detract from these efforts. Instead, SIRC's
concerns are directed at CSIS HQ, which has responsibility for the foreign deployment of CSIS employees and the
procedures and practices for which they are expected to adhere to.

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5   CSIS'S COLLECTION EFFORTS WITHIN

This review assessed CSIS's provision of   intelligence
                 , as well as counter-terrorism collection efforts   . Overall, collection
activities within   have steadily increased as   has
become operational; however, **SIRC found that CSIS collection efforts within
have not produced significant intelligence to address the
mandate.** Two observations, which are examined below, form the basis for this finding:
first, there is a lack of cohesion between stated priorities and collection realities on
            ; and second, there is underdeveloped   .

5.1   CSIS Direction

CSIS management has emphasised that   was established to help address two
mandates

                                                              Both are
tier one collection priorities, meaning they are to receive "essential and predominant
resource commitment" by CSIS.[52]

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[52] CSIS Document, "Definition of Priority Tiers,"   (April 1, 2016).

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A review of CSIS's operational database, however, revealed limited collection for force [53]

The lack of cohesion between stated priorities and collection realities is also reflected in a general consensus expressed by CSIS employees to SIRC, namely, that collection remains focused on the traditional target set (i.e. Canadian foreign fighters). In particular, employees believe that there is a lack of clarity about what CSIS could realistically provide for
Although all employees emphasised that CSIS would immediately share threat-relevant information   , this scenario was viewed as exceptional.[54]

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[53] SIRC reviewed CSIS's operational holdings

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So long as CSIS deems _____ as a tier one collection priority, **SIRC recommends that CSIS create clear operational objectives to assist _____ employees in addressing the _____ mandate, and additionally, that further consideration be given to assessing if the resource allotment _____ is sufficiently robust to meet GoC intelligence needs.**

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE   April 25, 2017

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8   CONCLUSION

The transferability of the   model to other locations will depend on CSIS's continued tracking of lessons learned and its ability to adequately address known challenges. Future SIRC reviews will assess CSIS's progress in further refining the   model concept. As a final observation, over the course of this review, SIRC noted the discussions surrounding the risks associated with

SIRC will return to examine this still evolving issue.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, SIRC found that CSIS has methodically tracked the progress of the _____ pilot and has identified areas requiring further attention to help meet operational objectives.

SIRC found that CSIS has not created any formal process for discussing, evaluating, assessing and documenting what would constitute necessary and reasonable Standard Operating Procedures

SIRC found that CSIS collection efforts _____ have not produced significant intelligence to address the _____ mandate.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

SIRC recommends that CSIS develop Standard Operating Procedures derived from lessons-learned from operating within Dangerous Operating Environments in order to ensure that management and employees are aware of, and accountable for, baseline expectations of conduct.

SIRC recommends that CSIS create clear operational objectives to assist   employees in addressing the   mandate, and additionally, that further consideration be given to assessing if the resource allotment   is sufficiently robust to meet Government of Canada intelligence needs.

SIRC recommends that CSIS create, on a priority basis, in consultation with the Department of Justice, policy and procedures regarding